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NO. 11.

I HAVE BROUGHT MY LITTLE BROTHER BACK.

BY REV. W. M. WINGATE, OF WAKE FOREST COLLEGE, N. C.

"I have brought my little brother back," said a young soldier, as he stepped from the cars, and took my hand. He could say no more; his heart was full. It was indeed a sad case. This young man had, some two years before, spoken a long farewell to the home of his boyhood, leaving his mother, sisters, and this "little brother," and had gone to seek his fortunes in the thriving young State of Texas. He was at home on a thirty days' furlough. I remember well the scene on his return. He was a most affectionate brother, and tender-hearted son. He took his family by surprise, and with his weather-beaten brow, and the strange, half Mexican dress of a Texas Ranger, was scarcely recognized as the long absent boy.

The joyful greeting is over. But the "little brother"

is not there to mingle glad tears with the happy family. He is away at his post near Richmond. Though barely sixteen, he has volunteered for the war, and has already seen much of the stern life of the soldier. There, with the brave army so soon to be immortal, he awaits the onset of the invading host. The Western soldier has scarcely settled himself at home, when the news is borne on the telegraph that the terrible battles around the Capitol have commenced. In his military ardor the feeling of home is for the moment forgotten, and he leaves on the first train that he may see the smoke of battle, and be near at hand to watch the fate of his brother.

The young soldier has returned. The battles around Richmond are still raging. Our brave army is steadily driving the enemy from his long line of entrenchments and multiplied redoubts. He is at last in full retreat. The Capitol is safe. Victory after victory is sounded through the land. Glad voices greet you on every side, as the cars arrive. Cheers rise on the air, and a thousand grateful hearts swell with God's great deliverance. But here and there, amid the happy throng, could be seen one whose sad face spoke a mournful contrast. Such an one grasped my hand, and brushing a tear away, said: "Mr. ——— I have brought my little brother back." He had fallen. In his first battle, in the first fierce encounter around the Capitol of his country, his temples were pierced by the fatal bullet, and now, in a neat case, secured by the kind Chaplain, he is brought to his home.

But the worst is yet to come. Listen to me, dear young man—you who are so bravely battling for all we hold dear. This noble youth, who had thus fallen for his country and his people, *was, I fear, not prepared to die:*

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What, thought I, as I made my way to the scene of suffering affection, can I say to his mother? That mother I knew well; and knowing her as I did, I knew what alone would comfort her.

I THOUGHT OF HIS YOUTH. He had not indeed made any profession of faith in Christ. He had said nothing on the subject to any of his companions. No one knew that he had ever been really serious on the subject of his soul's interests. Still he was so young. Only sixteen brief summers had measured his short probation. Was there not some hope in this circumstance? The longest life, the three score years and ten, is full short enough to prepare for vast eternity. It is as the drop to the ocean. And will not a kind and benevolent Being, as we know God to be, allow some mitigation of His law for extreme youth? He knows with what thoughtlessness we run along over this period of our days; how much of life—buoyant, hopeful life—there is in us, and how little we care for the morrow. Will He not relent—allow some abatement of the stern sentence against a young man who had *only too thoughtlessly* let his precious probation slip from him? No, dear young man, I fear this plausible view will not answer. It is not a long or short life, as such, that gives us opportunities for final preparation: nor does it take any specific period for preparation. It is *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and nothing more; faith that works—whether a longer or a shorter time—by love, and purifies the heart. In this faith is life. True, youth is thoughtless; but youth is susceptible, too; and, as compared with other periods of life, is as favorable for securing salvation as any other. Indeed, the Scriptures would have us infer that, sober and thoughtful as mature age may be, it is not so well fitted for the work of preparation as the tender years

of youth. "Remember now thy Creator," writes the wise man, "in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." And if they will indulge because it is their spring time, the same inspired one tells them, for warning, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." How could I soothe the mother, then, on account of his youth?

BUT I THOUGHT OF THE SUDDENNESS OF HIS DEATH. The fatal bullet pierced his temples at the beginning of the struggle, and he fell without a word for the stricken ones at home. No moment left him for sober thought. No time for one brief prayer. At once he was summoned into the presence of the Judge. Would not this mitigate the case? Sometimes the kind Judge allows a brief interval. The wound is mortal; but, though sinners long, they may, and perchance do repent before they die. The disease is fatal; still, time is allowed for some serious moments ere the messenger summons them away. But here no word; no time for committing the spirit. The solemn darkness overshadowed him at once.

But I could honestly see no comfort in this. He had received much instruction at home; had been fully warned of the uncertainty of life. For his country's sake had entered the army at the place of danger. Disease had already taken many from his side, and battle he knew would take many more. Brave, as he was, he expected to stem the leaden hail, and fearlessly charge on batteries vomiting forth the missiles of death. And yet, with all this in view, he dared to go, did go, without preparation. Too fearless, he ventured his soul, not his body only, *his soul*, upon the fate of battle. Too ad-

venturous, he put his little all at stake, *and lost*. Alas ! I could see no comfort in this. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.— But fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you fear Him."

BUT THIS YOUNG MAN DIED IN DEFENCE OF HIS COUNTRY.— They whispered this—the kind friends who were at his grave—to his mother. Some told the sisters their brother had died in a noble cause ; and the father's face was lit up with a momentary triumph as the preacher spoke of his falling in defence of all we hold dear. I thought of this too. A martyr in a noble cause. A bleeding victim upon the altar of his country. Well ! if there could be a way for a noble death, in the eye of our Judge, to atone for misspent life, then these friends had ground for consolation. If, from any battle-fields heroes went, by virtue of their death and noble disdain of danger, to the realms of the blessed, there would then be hope for *our* dead, fallen on so many crimsoned fields for all we hold dear in life, liberty and honor. But will this suffice ? O, no ! There is no comfort here. Earthly comfort there may be. Cause for honest, patriotic pride there may be ; but for the other world, comfort there can be none. For who is He to whose bar we must be brought, and with whom we must contend ? No political judge ; no military chieftain. The issue with Him is not national, but personal. There is no test of bravery ; the test is faith ; faith in His beloved Son, whom He has sent into our world to seek and save the lost. Neglecting Him, no cause can justify, no death can atone.

BUT HE WAS AN AMIABLE YOUNG MAN. Noble, generous, brave ; full of ardor for his country ; tenderly sensitive of his honor and earnest in the discharge of duty ; such was this son and brother. Was there not comfort in this ? Yes ! yes ! It made his family feel their loss more. It made his companions lament his fall. But did it help the young man in the world to which he had gone ? Did his many amiable qualities plead in his behalf ? I call to mind the amiable young man of the gospels, who came *kneeling* to Christ, saying,

"Good Master, what *good* thing shall I do?" Jesus *loved* him; and yet "one thing," said the kind Teacher, "thou lackest." I remember the Scribe who answered so discreetly that the Saviour said, "Thou art *not far* from the kingdom of heaven." Still, he was in the kingdom of darkness.— Could I, then, in this, bring any real comfort to the broken-hearted mother? No! Her brave, generous, noble hearted boy had gone! Not far indeed from the kingdom of heaven, yet not having entered. Amiable and keeping many of the commandments; yet lacking *one* thing, and in this lacking *all*. How sad the case of such! My heart bleeds to think of it. When the profane swearer goes to the place assigned to the wicked, we all feel that this is his place. When the whoremonger and the adulterer receive their doom, we feel that this is well. But when noble youth is snatched away, we hesitate and fear to state his case. But why should we? He has not loved the blessed and immaculate One. With a mind open to noble impressions; with a heart susceptible to the good and pure he has not honored God's own Son. And this is *the sin*, the damning sin. Here *all depravity* is found. "If any man," no matter how estimable and honored among his fellows, "If any man *love* not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Let him be accursed when the Lord cometh.

I REMEMBERED THAT THIS YOUNG SOLDIER HAD A PRAYING MOTHER. His father, and his sisters, too, were members of the church, and doubtless prayed frequently and fervently for the absent and exposed *one*, that God would shield him in the day of battle, and save him in the day of judgment. But his mother was peculiarly earnest in her prayers. And who has not heard that "praying breath was never spent in vain?" And then, I had always felt

that there was peculiar virtue in a *mother's prayers*. Indeed, I had often said as much to this anxious mother, because I knew there was such power in prayer, in earnest, believing prayer. But from the very circumstance that this precious truth is urged so frequently, both in public and in private, I fear that many young persons greatly abuse it. I am afraid that this young man trusted to his mother's prayers to shield him in the day of battle. Perchance he thought he could not die, till that mother's desire was fulfilled. If he did not, I am sure that many do. Away off in the army, around their camp-fires, they think of the protection of a pious mother's prayers. And the sister writes, telling dear brother, that all the family join in prayers for his safety, and as he folds the letter to his heart, and thinks of dear ones at home, he loves to feel that he is shielded. But strange, he will not pray for *himself*. Trusting to the prayers of others, he utters none to the loving Father of his spirit. Well! I cannot answer for this. Would God that none would trust to it! I only know that this young man had a praying father, praying sisters, and a praying mother. I know that he left no word of consolation; sent no message to soothe their stricken hearts; and that now that mother weeps for him as for a lost son. Yes, in all his youth and beauty, defence of dearest rights and a goodly heritage, she fears her noble boy is lost, and lost forever. Ah, me! There is something dreadful in that. Why should the mother feel it? She said—poor woman! I thought her heart would fail me as I listened to her—she said, she could have watched his sick couch, had God seen fit to afflict him; I could have nursed his wounds for days and weeks, and seen him scarred and maimed for life. I could have seen him die, die at home or on the battle-field if I could

have had *hope* in his death; could have caught from his lips *some word* of the better land to treasure up in my heart."

Ah, well! I know not how to comfort. This case is sad, indeed. Young man, dear young man, this is not written for her, to open afresh her wounds. God alone can heal them. I trust she will not see these pages. Under a solemn sense of duty, I have penned these lines for *you*. Far away in the camps, standing on the night sentry, or tramping wearily on the march, I often think of *you--you* who are exposing your body, once so buoyant and free, to the cold rains and bleak winds, and to the fury and tempest of battle; exposing yourself without a murmur for loved ones at home, and the goodly heritage so dear to us all. What can I say to *you*? How speak, when I think of your *other* exposures? Are you prepared to stand there *for me*? When the slow fever comes on, or the chill, on the night watch, or the whistling bullet; so sudden, ARE YOU READY? Is your armor all bright? Have you the shield of faith, and the breastplate of righteousness, and the helmet of salvation? *Put them on*. Let me pray you as I love you, *put them on*, if you have them not. *Put them on at once*. May God bless you, is my prayer.

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